

# MOHAVE COUNTY MINER

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MINERAL PARK, A. T., SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1882.

## PROFESSIONAL CARDS.

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## THE FIRST MINNESOTA.

### The Most Gallant Charge of the War.

[We are permitted to take the following account of a splendid achievement at the battle of Gettysburg from an unpublished manuscript lecture, written by the Hon. Martin Maginnis, of Montana, who was an actor in the scene he describes. Col. Bachelder, the historian, in one of the meetings last winter at General Dudley's office, narrated this incident briefly, as one of the most remarkable charges of the war, and said he had often been asked by Confederate officers who were present to tell them what regiment it was that came at them so heroically just as their troops pursuing Sickles' broken corps had nearly reached the crest of Cemetery Ridge. It is not necessary to add anything to the graphic description of Maj. Maginnis. The Army of the Potomac had no finer regiment than the First Minnesota, and its whole history may be ransacked in vain to find a more heroic charge than this regiment made on the second day at Gettysburg.]

The morning was foggy, sultry, and murky, and spent chiefly in skirmishing and desultory cannonading. The sharpshooters on our front contesting the right to hold the farm-houses, which were alternately occupied by either side, and finally burned. About 2 p. m. Gen. Sickles made a reconnaissance, which developed the presence of the enemy in light force on his front, whereupon he moved his corps to the front and occupied an intermediate ridge, the right forming along the Emmettsburg road to the peach orchard from which his left bent back to the foot of Round Top. The enemy opened batteries far to Sickles' left. The rattling fire of the skirmishers deepened into the continuous roll of musketry as the enemy threw forward forces to dispute his advance. The artillery opened on both sides with vigor, and the engagement became general all along the front of his line. The enemy at this time were quiet on our extreme right, while in the centre the batteries alone were engaged. Two companies of the First (the Red Wing Company and the Second Sharpshooters) were out on the skirmish line. Another was on provost guard, and the other eight were detached from our proper brigade position and sent down to the left to form a reserve support for a section of United States Artillery, which was posted on that part of the ridge from which Sickles had just advanced.

Once there, although obliged to keep low and not expose ourselves to the cannon balls, shells, and bullets, which, coming over the heads of the troops in front, went whistling and bursting above and around us, we beheld a grand sight. Below and before us on the plain the battle was fiercely raging. Every movement of the opposing troops was discernible and we watched them with the anxiety of spectators so deeply interested in the result: though but little of this could be seen in the faces of our men, who, long accustomed to conceal their emotions beneath the mask of reckless indifference, were with apparent unconcern criticising impartially the fighting of friend and foe. Soon the view became more obscured, for, though the sun shone brightly, the air was damp and the smoke hung heavily over the fight, sometimes in rolling, cloudy masses and again, like a well-defined, conforming to the line of the fighting high in the air.

with the apex pushed over the Emmettsburg road, and the enemy attacked this from both sides with extreme fury. To fill up the break in the original line of battle caused by Sickles' advance, Caldwell's division of the Second Army Corps was put into the gap on his left, and joined the Fifth Corps, which, stretching still to the left, rested on Round Top. The Second Division of the Second Corps resting near Cemetery Hill, was also advanced and realigned with a view to supporting the right of the Third Corps. But the active enemy threw himself on the apex of Sickles' advanced position with such tremendous force of men that it soon became evident that here on the left, and not on the other wing, the enemy had been gathering his heaviest forces to break through. Meanwhile Lee's entire line advanced to engage ours everywhere, and prevent the changing of troops. Pushing the divisions of the Third Corps on their exposed flanks, the enemy began to crumble it up and force it back over the ground which it had won. Sickles being wounded about the time his center broke, and the line gave way and went to our rear. Our troops in front gallantly endeavored to sustain themselves and check the momentum of the enemy, and with the assistance of some reserve regiments made him halt and waver. The contest was sharp and heavy, and success trembled in the balance, till still fresh battalions of the foe came down and our gallant boys gave way, carrying back their colors and slightly wounded, and rallying by squads, and then to empty their guns once more at their pursuers, but all organized, concerted, effective action on the part of the corps was at an end. The rebel batteries poured grape and canister into the retreating groups, and their infantry advancing with triumphant yells, showed rapid volleys of leaden hail into the broken ranks, which were reeling and staggering back, but still turning to make fight, like some feeble but spirited man beneath the blows of a young and vigorous giant. Thomas' battery, which had necessarily been silent till these troops had cleared its front, now opened upon the rebel infantry at short range. This turned their attention to an objective point, and soon a group of crimson battle-flags were advancing through the smoke toward it, supported only as it was by eight companies of the First Minnesota—252 officers and men all told.

Just then Hancock rode up, and, unable to conceal his agitation, asked in almost anguished tones, "Great God! is this all the men we have here?" and turned toward the right, from which was hastening Gen. Alpheus Williams' division, but still five minutes distant, and before they reached us the foe would have the battery and gain the very heart of the position. Not a hundred yards behind us was the road, crowded with our wagons, and beyond them the hospitals and trains. If Hancock could only stop that charging mass for five minutes. A hope lit up his face, and, pointing to the smoke covered masses of the advancing foe, he cried:

"Col. Colvill, advance and take those colors!"

It is an easy thing to charge when their enemy is retreating and the battle going well, but it requires steady troops to even hold a position when the line is breaking away on every side, and it was a strange order to give a handful to charge that advancing mass that had just carried off the best divisions of their feet. They looked at them as Nolan might have looked at the Russian cannon at Malaklava, and with the same disposition to unquestionably obey.

Forward went our gallant regiment, as if on review, and the cannon opened on them.

No! unlike the famous veterans of Fontenoy, they are unsustained by the excitement of firing. Within a hundred, within fifty yards of the foe, one quarter of our men already fallen, and yet no shot has been fired at the enemy, whose foremost rank, consisting of Forney's, Herbert's, and other regiments of the Alabama brigade, commanded by Wilcox, and portions of Barksdale's brigade of Mississippians, all of whom had lost their order and alignment, and become mingled in one advancing mass during their fight with and pursuit of the Third Corps. Behind them in alignment came a body of troops, since understood to be a Florida brigade, which had not been actively engaged, but was supporting the victorious advance of their comrades. As soon as our movement was noticed the advancing mass stopped and opened a murderous fire upon us at not more than fifty yards' distance.

"Charge, men!" ran the order along the line, and with a wild cheer we ran at them. Their extended front swept around our flanks like the waters round a rock. But before us they give way, for we empty our guns with the muzzles at their very hearts, and but little ammunition was wasted at that valley. A perfect swath of men sink on the ground, and their living recoil back upon their second and third lines, and the body of many a chivalric Southerner lies beneath the feet of our men. Their supporting lines, confused and excited, wildly commence firing through the mass in front, slaughtering their own men by hundreds, and throwing the whole column into confusion, while their artillery from the rear fired on friend and foe alike. Their officers endeavored to stop the firing and restore order, and there, like some small obstacle thrown in the way of a locomotive to stop the power that will grind it to dust, we had momentarily checked the momentum of the mass, which in another moment would recover itself and sweep us from the earth; but the time had been gained, and at that instant a battery on our left opened, and, pouring a few rapid volleys in to the confused mass swept it from the field; and before we had recovered from the shock we found ourselves among groups of disarmed prisoners, and our bewildered senses take in the fact that the enemy have somehow disappeared from the plain, all but his dead & wounded, and their prostrate bodies ring the hearty cheers of our reinforcing troops.

This is the manner and order which these things happened, as I have been told by those whose position made them lookers-on. For who that was an actor there can give the order or detail the changes of the eventful and exciting moments following that word "Charge?" when we heard neither ball nor shell nor saw our comrades fall: when the blood rushed like fire through the distended veins and every faculty was absorbed in the one desire to conquer or to die—no, not to die, for though thoughts of the icy King of Terrors may for a minute chill the heart of the bravest when the battle is commencing, and the blood is cold, every fear of that grim dweller on the threshold of eternity is long since lost in the glorious enthusiasm of action.

The almost fatal attack was repulsed; but where was the First Minnesota? Had they deserted the field for the first time? This was the first idea that came to my senses, half oblivious of what had passed. But forty-seven men now gathered around the colors. Great heavens! is it possible that the other two hundred and five lie bleeding under the feet of the enemy? Yes, they are all there within a hundred yards of crimson death, and none missing. Below, noble and heroic men, our countrymen for all.

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